

NATIONAL THREAT LANDSCAPE STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

This assessment is intended to provide situational awareness of threats with potential national-level implications related to public order, public safety and the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. The information in this assessment is based on reporting from RCMP Divisions, law enforcement partners, searches conducted against RCMP holdings, and open source resources (current as of 2021-07-28). The IMCIT continues to maintain visibility on emerging threats and will provide updates on a periodic or as required basis.

KEY POINTS

- Threats to officer and public safety arising from the public order events discussed below are currently assessed as low. Law enforcement partners have not reported any information indicating that protestors or protest organizers are overtly advocating for violence.
- Threats to the vaccine supply chain and critical infrastructure Health Sector during the vaccine rollout are currently assessed as low.

THREATS TO PUBLIC SAFETY

Based on current available information, threats to the public safety are assessed as low.

FISHERIES DISPUTE - ST. MARYS BAY, NOVA SCOTIA (NS)

Potential for unauthorized fishing and potential for tensions between non-Indigenous and Indigenous fishers which could impact public or officer safety.

In September of 2020, the Sipekne'katik First Nation community fishers launched a self-regulated lobster fishery that met with opposition from non-Indigenous commercial fishers resulting in violence, property damage and arson.¹ In July of 2021, arson charges were laid against an individual in relation to an October 2020 fire.² The Sipekne'katik previously advised that they intended to re-launch a fishery in June of 2021 in St. Marys Bay outside of the federal commercial season and without federal licenses.³

At the time of this writing, news reports indicate the Sipekne'katik harvesters are currently fishing for food and ceremony.⁴ Information from "H" Division indicates there is an air of tension looming in the area, and comments have been made that things could "erupt" at any time between Indigenous and non-Indigenous commercial fishers.^{s.37}

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Currently this dispute is limited to “H” Division. The IMCIT has not identified information to suggest public order events will occur in Nova Scotia, as they have in the past,⁶ nor that there could be spillover into other parts of the country.

OLD-GROWTH LOGGING - SOUTHWEST VANCOUVER ISLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA (BC)

Potential for continued criminality, potential for solidarity actions and potential for counter-protests which could impact public or officer safety.

The RCMP’s enforcement of an injunction in an area where blockades opposed to old-growth logging have been set-up since August of 2020⁷ has resulted in 497 arrests since May of 2021.⁸ This injunction prohibits persons from obstructing, impeding or interfering with the contractor’s work in the Fairy Creek Watershed area.⁹ The arrests and issue of old-growth logging protection have gained attention from environmental groups globally, and peaceful solidarity protests have been held in Calgary and Toronto. On July 24, 2021, 12 protesters in Vancouver were arrested for blocking Burrard Bridge to bring attention to the connection between the recent heat wave and wildfires in the province and old-growth logging.¹⁰ Environmental groups local to BC continue to initiate public order events in the province and may attend the various blockade locations. “E” Division continues to provide information on the blockade camps and refer local protests to the applicable Police of Jurisdiction.¹¹

In addition to the logging blockades, protests have also occurred in support of the logging industry.¹² These protests have been largely peaceful, although the media has reported some altercations between forestry workers and protesters.¹³ In July of 2021, a judge ruled that the media must be allowed to enter areas previously deemed exclusion zones put in place by the RCMP,¹⁴ which were being used to control access to the area. This could lead to increased news and social media reporting on the activities of the protesters.

Continued enforcement of the injunction is likely to be perceived negatively by the protesters and could spark more solidarity actions across the country. Updates from “E” Division indicate concern for the safety of protesters based on the tactics being used to breach the injunction.¹⁵ Moreover, the likelihood of conflict between pro and anti-logging parties increases as this dispute continues.

CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES - NATIONAL MOBILIZATION

Potential for criminality and potential for Canada-wide actions.

Environmental groups are attempting to coordinate nationwide days of action in August and October of 2021 to bring attention to the issue of climate change.^{16 17} While there is no specific date for the August action, October 16th has been announced as a potential date in the Fall. It is anticipated these events will be widely publicized through social media leading up to the actions, which will include public order events across the country.

While the majority of these events are likely to be peaceful, past tactics by some of the groups involved have included blocking bridges and traffic disruptions at intersections. Recent media reports about extreme heat and wildfires forcing evacuations from some areas in Canada¹⁸ have garnered public attention and environmental groups are seizing the opportunity to further their narratives. This

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increased attention to the issue of climate change, coupled with the easing of gathering limits in several provinces may lead to ongoing public order events related to environmental issues.

“WHITE LIVES MATTER” MARCHES AND POSTERING CAMPAIGN

Potential for solidarity actions and counter-protests that could impact public or officer safety.

“White Lives Matter” (WLM) public order events have been advertised internationally since March of 2021. Although posters with WLM branding have been observed in several Canadian cities, public order events have been confined to Ontario with protests occurring monthly since April of 2021. Attendance at events has been minimal with no reported incidents of violence.

Global protests by WLM groups in 2021 are set to occur monthly throughout the remainder of 2021. Open source queries and information from law enforcement partners for this reporting period yielded no specific intelligence to indicate these events pose a risk to public safety from protesters or counter-protesters.

ANTI-LOCKDOWN/ANTI-MASK/ANTI-VACCINATION PROTESTS

Potential for public health restriction violations.

As provinces gradually reopen, the weekly protests opposed to public health restrictions occurring across the country have shifted narratives to include anti-vaccination sentiment. To date, law enforcement partners have not reported any information indicating that protestors or protest organizers are overtly advocating for violence.

Since April of 2020, anti-lockdown public order events in Canadian cities have attracted participation from various ethno-nationalist groups who, in previous years (2016-2019), had a visible presence at protests advocating for positions considered to be anti-immigration and anti-Muslim in nature. It is important to note, however, that anti-lockdown protests are also attracting individuals who are not aligned with any specific ideology or group, but are experiencing pandemic fatigue due to economic strain, business closures, job losses, or other personal hardships.

Aside from public health risks, no other public safety threats related to the ongoing protests have been identified. The easing of public health measures in several provinces has reduced attendance at these events. However, as vaccination regulations evolve for business and travel, perceptions of “forced vaccination” are driving discussions in online spaces previously devoted to anti-lockdown rhetoric.

THREATS TO THE COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

Based on current available information, threats to the vaccine rollout are assessed as low.

Anti-vaccination public order events have occurred nationwide. Protesters gathered to voice concerns against the possibilities of mandatory vaccinations and proof of vaccination requirements (e.g. “vaccine passports”) for work or travel. Recent anti-vaccination protests in Europe have involved incidents of vandalism at vaccination centres and clashes with police. In Canada, however, there are no reports of violence or efforts to disrupt the vaccine rollout arising from these protests for this reporting period.

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However, a self-identified new government leader, who claims to be Head of State and Commander in Chief of Canada, is continuing to post content online alleging that COVID-19 public health measures, including the vaccine, are illegitimate. She is also encouraging her followers to deliver "cease and desist" letters ordering the end of masking, vaccination, and lockdown mandates. Recent content posted online by social media accounts associated to this individual include the issuance of false military orders, which encourage followers to protest the aforementioned public health measures by any means necessary.

Issued by: Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (IMCIT)

Approved by: Director, Directorate of Strategic Intelligence, Federal Policing National Intelligence

¹ <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/lobster-catch-destroyed-vehicle-burned-as-tension-rises-over-indigenous-fishery-in-n-s-1.5144540>

² <https://globalnews.ca/news/8033306/man-charged-in-relation-to-massive-fire-at-n-s-lobster-pound/>

³ <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/n-s-mi-kmaq-fisher-says-his-movements-are-being-watched-and-his-traps-seized-by-dfo-1.5434949>

⁴ <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/mikmaw-harvesting-lobster-in-nova-scotia-under-heavy-police-dfo-presence/>

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⁶ <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/nova-scotia-lobster-fishermen-protest-out-of-control-first-nations-fishery-1.5106027>

⁷ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-old-growth-logging-demonstrations-on-vancouver-island-1.6037100>

⁸ <https://bc-cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=2087&languageId=1&contentId=70548>

⁹ <https://bc-cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=2087&languageId=1&contentId=69499>

¹⁰ <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/12-arrested-at-climate-protest-that-blocked-burrard-bridge-1.5522357>

¹¹ RCMP E Division, Division Intelligence Analysis Team, Criminal Intelligence Section

¹² <https://www.cowichanvalleycitizen.com/news/vancouver-island-logging-supporters-rally-in-mesachie-lake/>

¹³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/altercation-video-loggers-protesters-1.6015920>

¹⁴ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/judge-fairy-creek-media-restrictions-won-1.6112156>

¹⁵ <https://bc-cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=2130&languageId=1&contentId=70114>

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/events/508464743789297/>

¹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/events/306731521233715/>

¹⁸ <https://globalnews.ca/news/8045796/canada-wildfires-yearly-trends/>